



Missouri Wine History

French settlers in the St. Louis and Ste. Genevieve regions began growing grapes in the late 18th and early 19th century. Grape growing accelerated in the 19th century with the arrival of German settlers in central Missouri, near Hermann. In the 1860s Missouri's Phylloxera resistant rootstock enabled the recovery of southern France's wine industry. By the 1880s, Missouri was a leading producer of grapes. Except for small-scale cultivation of Concord grapes for unfermented grape juice, grape production ceased with Prohibition but was revived with the re-opening of Missouri wineries in the 1960s. Missouri now ranks 12th among U.S. grape producing states.

C.V. Riley

In 1868, Charles Valentine Riley became the first state appointed entomologist in Missouri. Riley is credited with saving the French wine industry after he realized that the American native grapevine, *Vitis labrusca* was resistant to the harmful grape Phylloxera, which was reeking havoc on French vineyards during the late 1800s. Riley helped create a Phylloxera-immune rootstock using the U.S. grapevine. The rootstock was shipped to France and helped rebuild the European wine industry.

Missouri Wine Through the Years

1837

German settlers established the town of Hermann on the banks of the Missouri River. Although too rocky for many crops, the ground around Hermann was well suited for growing wine grapes. A decade later, Hermann's wineries were producing more than 10,000 gallons of wine a year. Eventually, more than 60 wineries populated the small town, and by the 1880s, wine lovers in America and Europe were enjoying two million gallons of Missouri wine each year.

1870s

A dangerous vineyard pest, the phylloxera louse, destroyed enormous tracts of vineyards in France. Missouri helped rebuild the European vineyards by sending phylloxera resistant American rootstock to be grafted with French vine cuttings. The resultant vines proved extremely hardy and soon the French wine industry was back on its feet.

Late 1800s

Italian immigrants establish vineyards in the St. James area of Missouri. Missouri's wine industry thrived at the turn of the century with about 100 wineries throughout the state.

1919

Prohibition dealt a near fatal blow to the Missouri wine industry. When the 18th Amendment was repealed 13 years later, little remained of the once strong industry. Negative after effects of Prohibition, in the form of high liquor taxes and license fees, lingered for decades and prevented the wine industry from reestablishing itself.

1960s and 1970s

The rebirth of the commercial wine industry in Missouri began with the restoration of several original wineries. The early pioneers worked hard to regain the former stature of the wine industry amid a slowly changing cultural and regulatory environment.

1980s

A new tax on wine enabled the establishment of the Missouri Wine & Grape program. A state viticulturalist was hired to assist in the restoration process and Missouri State University 's fruit experiment station began working with winemakers to determine grape varieties suitable for Missouri 's climate.

Augusta became the first federally recognized American Viticultural Area (AVA) in 1980. The wine regions around Hermann, the southwest Missouri Ozark mountains and highlands and the south central region around St. James have also been designated as AVAs.

2000

The Missouri wine industry in the new millennium is thriving. The number of wineries has increased and Missouri wineries are producing diverse, complex and sophisticated wines, wines that easily earn top awards in national and international competitions.

2003

The Norton/Cynthiana varietal is passed in legislation as Missouri's official state grape.

2005

The Missouri Wine & Grape Board is formed. No longer an advisory Board, the Wine & Grape Board directs the marketing and research efforts of the Missouri wine industry.

2006

The Institute for Continental Climate Viticulture and Enology is established. ICCVE, funded by the Missouri Wine & Grape Board, conducts research on grape varieties and vineyard management techniques that contribute to the growth of the wine industry in Missouri and the Midwest.

2011

The state of Missouri proudly welcomed its 100th winery to its lineup.